

ILAA 2011

We have just completed our 37th Annual Conference and it was a great weekend. The first order of business is to thank our Tampa Bay volunteers, led by Tim and Elaine Sweeney, for organizing an extraordinary conference.

I don't know how they pulled it off, but we got three hot, beautiful sunny days in the middle of hurricane season and that was just the beginning.

For the first time in ILAA history and despite a herculean effort on the part of the members, we did not run out of ice cream at the Friday night ice cream social. Mountains of chocolate, vanilla and strawberry covered with whipped cream and toppings were a sweet beginning for the weekend. Our Friday night speaker, Judy R., shared her story with us. We all could identify with Judy's struggle, frustration and despair and her message of hope, as she told us of a Higher Power that guided and directed her from the depths of alcoholism to a successful and satisfying career in law and with the Florida LAP.

Friday's dine around dinner, ice cream social and Judy R.'s talk were sandwiched between recovery meetings at 4:30 pm and 10:00 pm. The excitement of seeing new faces and connecting with old friends cannot be expressed in words. We could feel the presence of the Power.

On Saturday, our chairman, Billy H. from Louisville, KY, led us at the annual business meeting. We were informed about plans to utilize electronic communication to reach out to our members. Stay tuned throughout the year as we try to keep all of our membership up to date. We are happy to announce that our 38th conference will be held in Montreal, Canada on October 5, 6 and 7. Mark your calendar and start saving to make sure that you do not miss this great event. In 2013, we will be reunited with COLAP in San Diego, CA at a site and date to be determined in the next few months.

The final order of business was the election of a trustee to succeed Billy H. Gary H. from Los Angeles was unanimously elected. Welcome aboard Gary.

Following the business meeting, the Old Timers' panel was chaired by David K. (insisting he was much younger than the panelists) and consisted of Eli G., Jim F. and Billy H. Albert R., one of our founders, was en route but did not arrive in time to participate. Following the Old Timers' panel, there was a women's recovery meeting and then free time for the afternoon.

There were recovery meetings at 5:30 pm followed by a feast centered around grouper or filet mignon and a sinful cheesecake and mousse dessert. The dinners were superb.

Following dinner, we took up a collection for registration scholarships for the 2012 conference. \$1,075.00 was contributed. That is a great start on our scholarship fund. If any member wanted to make a contribution to our scholarship fund, please contact me. We said good-bye to John C. and Buzz R. who were with ILAA from the start and Gene O'B., a long-time member who attended ILAA with his loving wife, Nancy, until health issues stood in the way. John, Buzz and Gene have joined John McD., Ray O'K., Jack K. and so many others who guide us and direct in the spirit of fellowship and love and are right now directing our course as we trudge the road of Happy Destiny.

All attendees were encouraged to begin planning for 2012 now!! By putting away \$20.00 a week, each week for the next 52 weeks, you will be able to spend a weekend sharing experience, strength and hope that is beyond your imagination. Each attendee was encouraged to bring a member who did not attend this year. If you were unable to attend in 2011, start planning now and you will be there to join us in Montreal. Do not miss the opportunity, you won't regret it.

Our Saturday night speaker, John M., had a terrific tale of alcoholic debauchery, isolation and pain, miraculously relieved by the Power that we find in Alcoholic Anonymous. John touched all of our hearts and we all left grateful that we had another sober day.

Saturday was Billy H.'s last day as a trustee. We all thanked Billy for his dedication and loving service over the last five years and really since he first attended ILAA over 25 years ago. Thank you again Billy for a job well-done.

We wrapped up the night with a 10:00 pm meeting that touched everyone who attended.

Sunday morning started with a 7:00 am meeting followed by a nutritious continental breakfast and the compelling story of Darryl R. describing the fall and rise of an alcoholic in a way that stirred everyone's heart and imagination. The Higher Power carries Darryl every day and he let us know that it was the redemptive grace of the Higher Power that changed his life and resulted in a spiritual awakening, an awakening that Darryl described as a change in the way he reacts to the world around him.

Wow, what an order! 10 meetings in two days, plenty of time in the sun, great food and fellowship. It cannot be beat. Join us in Montreal, CA, October 5, 6 and 7 for a weekend of joy that you will never forget.

Luv ya,
Chuck B